United Nations S/PV.7894

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**7894**th meeting

Thursday, 9 March 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *President*: | Mr. Rycroft | (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Soliz |
| | China | Mr. Shen Bo |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Mr. Lambertini |
| | Japan | Mr. Okamura |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skau |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Vitrenko |
| | United States of America | Ms. Sison |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |

## Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Security Council mission to the Lake Chad basin region (2 to 7 March 2017)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-06228 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Expression of thanks to the outgoing President**

**The President**: As this is the first formal meeting of the Council for the month of March, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on our collective behalf, to Volodymyr Yelchenko and his excellent team for their service in the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. I speak for all of us, I am sure, in expressing our deep appreciation to Volodymyr and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Security Council mission**

**Briefing by Security Council mission to the Lake Chad basin region (2 to 7 March 2017)**

**The President**: On behalf of the members of the Security Council, I should like to pay a particularly warm welcome to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, who is taking part in our formal meeting today for the first time in her new capacity. She is very, very welcome.

Also, as this is the first public meeting of our presidency, I should like to remind Council members and briefers that we will be using the red flashing light system to encourage all speakers to keep to time. When the light flashes, that is a sign to stop, not an encouragement to keep going. For all Member States, the light will begin to flash after five minutes, and for today's briefers, the light will flash after 10 minutes. For each meeting, we intend that the total amount of briefing time should not exceed 30 minutes.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the three co-leads of the Security Council mission to the countries of the Lake Chad basin — Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria — namely, France, Senegal and the United Kingdom. The Deputy Secretary-General will then brief us on the actions that the United Nations is taking to address the security, humanitarian and development crises in the region.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom on the Council's visit.

As co-lead for the Council's visit to the Lake Chad basin, I would like to focus my remarks this morning on the security situation, and my colleagues the other co-leads will tackle the other two big themes of our visit, which is the humanitarian and the longer-term development and root causes. But before I do so, I would like to thank, on behalf of all of us, the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, as well as the United Nations, for having made this visit possible. I wish also to thank all Council members for making the most of the visit and an ambitious programme and for keeping up with it.

If I had been talking to the Council about security in the Lake Chad basin a week ago, I would have spoken about the statistics — the numbers: 20,000 people killed and 2.3 million currently displaced. What I could not have done was tell Council members their stories, the lives behind these numbers, the human cost of the fragile security situation.

Last Friday, in Maroua, in northern Cameroon, with my colleagues, I saw that cost in the eyes of a 15-year-old boy whose village had been attacked by Boko Haram. He hid for days before being interrogated and imprisoned by the authorities for two years on suspicion of being a member of Boko Haram. Most of his friends had already been killed. I saw that cost in the eyes of a woman crying with her baby in her arms. I saw it in others who spoke of the murder of their husbands or sons, the kidnapping of their daughters, the burning of their homes. We heard from civil society how women were selling their bodies for sex just to eat.

All these people brought home the horrifying consequences of the chaos and insecurity wrought by Boko Haram. I hope that together we brought some much-needed focus to the suffering, which been neglected for too long.

But amid the horror, we also heard of the bravery and commitment of the people of the region as they try to bring stability and security back to the Lake Chad basin. We heard chapters from a success story on its way to completion, and stories from the Multinational Joint Task Force of liberating 20,000 hostages and successfully winning back territory that will act as future homes for the people of the region. But the story is not over. Security is not yet entrenched; it is fragile in too

many places. Force commanders and generals outlined continued attacks. Suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices are still far too common. And Boko Haram's tactics are getting more barbaric — mothers turned into suicide bombers with infants strapped to them in addition to their bombs. Boko Haram are down but not out, but make no mistake — their cruelty knows no bounds.

It was clear that international support remains vital to this fight. We visited Operation Barkhane headquarters in D'Jamena, where we met French troops and were joined by members of the British and American military. Together, they are supporting the Multinational Joint Task Force, as well as the Nigerian military, through capacity-building, training and intelligence-sharing. We heard how further support was needed to enable better mobility and logistics in the fight.

Women's participation and protection were a constant theme throughout the visit, and it was clear that women must be more involved in efforts to tackle Boko Haram, counter violent extremism and build peace. We also heard of the hundreds of Boko Haram defectors, including women and children. We made clear the need for compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law by all actors in tackling the scourge of Boko Haram. That is essential to preventing mistreatment, including of detainees, as well as to building confidence among communities and counter radicalization.

Let me close with this final reflection. Only yesterday, here in New York, I met three inspirational young women from Chibok who were attending an International Women's Day event at the United Nations. Far from being victims and far from being survivors, those women are now campaigners for education for women and girls in poverty. Despite everything they had endured and despite being caught up in the hell unleashed by Boko Haram, they are determined to look to the future. They showed what lies ahead. They showed a future that may be possible when the fighting ends. To achieve that reality, it is clear that there can be no military solution; only a comprehensive approach will bring stability and peace. And so let me reiterate that the United Kingdom will stand side by side with the region, with the four Governments that we visited and with the affected people in this effort.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal to focus on the root causes and longer-term development.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of Senegal, I should like at the outset to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on the United Kingdom's assumption to the presidency of the Council for this month. You may rest assured of our support and full cooperation.

We also deeply thank the Governments and the peoples of the four countries that we visited: Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria.

I congratulate Ms. Amina Mohammed and wish her every success in her new functions as Deputy Secretary-General, which she assumed in March, including at yesterday's commemoration of International Women's Day.

I welcome this meeting to discuss the Security Council's historic visit from 2 to 7 March to the Lake Chad region, with successive stops in Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. As you rightly said, Mr. President, the visit was not only timely but also essential, given the extent to which the multidimensional crisis affecting that strategic part of the African continent has been neglected and even forgotten, as we attempt to redress today. As you, Sir, addressed the security dimension and Ambassador Delattre will address the human dimension, I shall focus on the part of our visit that was my purview — the deep-rooted causes of the crisis and long-term solutions.

All with whom we met from the Governments and the populace — including technical and financial partners, humanitarian actors and civil society representatives, pointed to the lack of education, training, sustainable development and resilience to the combined effects of climate change and global warming, which lie at the heart of the crisis we all wish to see resolved. There has also been a population explosion in the context of deteriorating environmental conditions and endemic poverty and unemployment. These factors complicate efforts to exploit the demographic transition that would make optimal use of the demographic dividend. Moreover, the countries of the region are suffering cruelly from the economic and financial effects of the fall in commodity prices, including that of oil, on which those countries' budgets rely heavily. When we add to that the pernicious effects of cross-border crime; the traffic in drugs, arms, human beings and cultural goods; the growing number of clandestine migratory

flows and cybercrime, we can assess the full scope of the challenges to that key region of the Sahelo-Saharan region.

What, then, are the region's long-term prospects? Throughout our visit, we affirmed the need to focus on everything from humanitarian issues to development. We need significant coordination at various levels between United Nations organs, specialized agencies, financial and technical partners, as well as subregional coordination within the States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and intergovernmental coordination at the national level, with contributions from the private sector and civil society. We look forward with interest to the contributions to be made by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General with respect to coordination in that area.

The Security Council should strengthen its exchnages with the other organs, in particular the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Our work with the Secretary-General is proceeding apace, although the available funding is drying up at the regional and international levels and remains dramatically insufficient to meet needs in all sectors. The small amount that has been announced and included in the budget is being spent effectively, but Governments, the humanitarian agencies and civil society organizations often appeal to the same donors. It is therefore important to identify and mobilize other sources of international financing, and above all domestic funding, by increasing contributions from the private sector, foundations and charitable organizations.

A platform to manage it all must be established, taking the priorities of Governments into account, particularly when they have prepared their own development programmes pursuant to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the economic agendas of the regional economic communities to which the countries belong — the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the Niger and Nigeria, and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for Cameroon and Chad.

In the security sector, the Security Council must strongly encourage and support the countries of the Lake Chad basin and their neighbours in their outstanding, high-profile efforts to combat terrorism in West and Central Africa. The Governments and the peoples of those countries have moved quickly to pool their resources to more effectively fight terrorists and organized crime. The establishment and operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force are a striking example of such cooperation and is extremely important to the world mobilization against that international scourge. These countries have a right to and fully deserve the decisive support of the international community, beginning with the Security Council.

A question was put to us during our visit as to why the Security Council takes so long to adopt resolutions that would help those countries. I have no easy answer to that question, but one banker even suggested that security, in its broadest understanding, should henceforth be considered to be a world public good. Countries, such as those of the Lake Chad basin, that contribute to the critical stability and security of the region therefore have the right to enjoy the benefits in terms of financial, logistical, and technical support, as well as in equipment and training adapted to highly asymmetric threats. We must also recall that two members of the Multinational Joint Task Force, Chad and the Niger, also belong to the Group of Five Sahel, which is another important subregional initiative to fight terrorist organizations operating in North and East Africa, particularly in Libya and northern Mali.

The Security Council should also fully utilize the conclusions of the joint visit in February by the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to the four countries of the Lake Chad basin, including the recommendations on strengthening judicial and police cooperation capacities, especially mutual legal instruments on assistance in the areas of prisoner extradition and transfer. It is also an issue of adopting a common strategy to properly address the matter of persons who have repented and turned themselves into the authorities, one that duly includes norms of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. That would also contribute to efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate women, children and youth, as the President just mentioned.

At our meeting at the Abuja headquartes of ECOWAS, which included officials of that organization and the Secretary-General of ECCAS, we received a briefing on the draft comprehensive strategy developed

jointly by those two organizations, which is aligned with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. An interregional ECOWAS/ECCAS summit is being prepared for the adoption of the draft strategy, which will include neighbouring countries from the Lake Chad basin, namely, Nigeria and Cameroon. As part of the analysis, it is important to include the maritime aspect of the counter-terrorism fight, as well as efforts to combat crime.

In conclusion, I should like to underscore that all of those efforts will be for naught unless Lake Chad is saved by raising the water level, either through plentiful rainfall in the long term or, as was explained to us, by diverting water from elsewhere. That can be done, as we say in Senegal, by way of hydro-diplomacy, namely, inter-State cooperation in order to fairly and jointly manage trans-border water resources, just as has been done for more than 40 years by Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal in the framework of the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River, and as done by the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal through the Gambia River Basin Development Organization.

Lastly, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has carried out a study on joint efforts with regard to Lake Chad, which I found very useful, entitled *The Future Is An Ancient Lake*. The report points out that many traditional practices in the Lake Chad basin could be useful in overcoming the challenges faced by the region owing to natural effects as well as human activity, including intensive agriculture. The reports refers to the importance of such practices as a good foundation upon which to develop a new ways of undertaking agriculture, grazing and sustainable fishing, all in the framework of a new ecosystem approach aimed at the integrated conservation of land, water and living resources, thereby ensuring equitable use and preservation. That is precisely what is called for in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Researchers have shown us how stakeholders in the Lake Chad basin — using traditional knowledge, biodiversity and the genetic resources of their land — could use new technologies in order to feed themselves, transform production and create added value; in a word, how to develop while safeguarding their ecosystem. The great hope aroused by our visit, both among the populations and the Governments, can therefore become a reality.

**The President**: I thank the representative of Senegal for his briefing and for his co-leadership of the visit.

I now give the floor to the representative of France, who will inform us about the humanitarian situation.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to welcome the presence here today of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, whose return to New York to take up her important duties is both a great opportunity for the United Nations and excellent news for us all. I should also like warmly to congratulate the United Kingdom on its accession to the presidency of the Security Council, as well as to assure it of our full support.

It was an honour and an unrivalled experience to lead this important Security Council visit to the Lake Chad region, along with you, Sir, and our colleague and friend from Senegal. I join you, Mr. President, in expressing thanks to all of the officials who welcomed us so warmly, including the entire United Nations team. In line with the distribution of issues we agreed, I will focus on the humanitarian situation.

On behalf of my colleagues, I should like to begin by paying tribute to the courage and commitment of the humanitarians we met, who are doing outstanding work in often very difficult situations. The daily commitment of those men and women is exemplary, and it is important that the Council visited them on the ground in order to express our deep gratitude.

The United Nations has considerably increased its presence on the ground, particularly in north-east Nigeria, to face the humanitarian crisis that threatens hundreds of thousands of people. We were able to visit the hub at Maiduguri, in north-east Nigeria, which brings together all humanitarian actors and is now operational. Those efforts must be pursued, while the United Nations must further strengthen its presence in order to meet the immense and growing needs of the most vulnerable populations. With regard to the humanitarian situation, we have identified three main issues: the humanitarian emergency, protection for affected populations and the challenge of financing humanitarian aid.

On the first challenge — the humanitarian emergency and access to populations in need — the humanitarian consequences of the crisis are catastrophic for the region: 26 million people affected, of whom

10.7 million are in need of emergency aid. More than two and a half million people have been forced to take to the road to flee or go into exile. Land is no longer cultivated, markets are at a standstill and the prices of basic necessities have soared.

Food security was the first urgent need highlighted by our interlocutors on the ground. The situation is tragic and threatens hundreds of thousands of people in the region. In total, more than 7 million people are affected. The Secretary-General has spoken of famine in the north-east of Nigeria. The Security Council was able to meet with displaced persons and refugees in Cameroon and Nigeria. All of them expressed the same concerns: problems of safety and access to water and quality food. The inhabitants are sometimes deprived of their means of subsistence and depend entirely upon humanitarian aid for their survival.

Insecurity and access difficulties sometimes complicate food distribution. It is therefore crucial that the countries of the region ensure unhindered access, without bureaucratic impediments, as well as secure access for the United Nations and humanitarian actors wherever populations need emergency assistance. To be truly effective, the efforts of the United Nations must be only in support of those of the Governments concerned. During its visit, the Council welcomed the excellent cooperation between the United Nations and the countries of the region. In north-east Nigeria, given the scale of the needs, we encouraged the Nigerian Government to continue its efforts to facilitate humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable people.

Health is the second emergency. With, for instance, 60 per cent of health-care facilities destroyed in north-east Nigeria, people are threatened by large-scale epidemics, such as polio or measles.

The third emergency is education. More than 1,200 schools have been destroyed since the beginning of the crisis, and 3.2 million children are urgently in need of education. Education for girls is paramount and should be encouraged. There is no time to be wasted in preventing this generation from being sacrificed.

In addition to the humanitarian emergency, the second challenge is that of ensuring the protection of civilians and respect for human rights. The goal is to ensure that people are kept safe from Boko Haram and to assist with the voluntary and sustainable return of displaced persons or refugees, where the security situation allows. The Council also recalled the importance of respecting humanitarian law and, to that end, welcomes the tripartite agreement signed by Nigeria, Cameroon and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 2 March in Yaoundé. The agreement allows for the creation of a solid legal framework to encourage the voluntary and sustainable return of Nigerian refugees to safe areas, under the auspices of the UNHCR. The Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria have committed to implementing that agreement as soon as possible.

The Security Council has also paid special attention to the plight of women and girls in the region. In Maroua, Cameroon, the Council heard stories of the pain inflicted on female refugees and internally displaced persons by Boko Haram. I think that, for all of us, it was a particularly powerful and touching encounter. In Chad and Nigeria, we also met with a number of civil society women's organizations for those displaced in the Maiduguri camp and women Senate representatives in Abuja. We lauded the courage shown by women and girls who are often victims of both Boko Haram violence and of stigmatization within their own communities. It is therefore crucial for those women not only to be protected from prostitution and early marriage, but also to be included in security management, political decision-making and economic development matters. It is a key point that struck us all, which I would like to underscore today.

The third challenge is that of providing financial support to affected areas. The response to the immense needs that I mentioned has remained inadequate. We welcomed Nigeria's commitment to allot $1 million to the north-east of the country in response to the humanitarian emergency. It is important for that financial commitment to lead to action as soon as possible. We have also noted that the international community's has rallied in support of the Government of Nigeria by building on the outcome of the Oslo Conference, which was held just prior to our mission and was a step in the right direction. Fourteen countries pledged $672 million in humanitarian aid over the next three years and $457 million for 2017. We have also underscored the need for the international community and Governments in the region to continue their efforts. By way of example, it is in that spirit that a donors' conference for Chad will be held this spring in Paris, under the auspices of the World Bank.

Given the magnitude of the needs, we underscored that it was important to promote a global and regional

approach to creating synergies and enhancing coordination with other donors and to mobilize goodwill, including private donors and companies, as well as other non-traditional donors such as emerging countries. Beyond that, our interviews revealed how important it is for humanitarian aid from partners to be equitably distributed among the four countries concerned and for it to be properly apportioned within each country according to emergency needs.

As underscored during the Oslo Conference, our interlocutors also recalled the importance of the humanitarian continuum, stabilization and development. Above and beyond financing for emergency humanitarian aid, as our friend Ambassador Seck pointed out, it is essential to secure long-term financing to prevent the perpetuation of the crisis. To put things in a broader perspective, I would say that, based on information on the situation on the ground, which is always the most important type, the mission was crucial for validating, and if necessary, rectifying some of the strategic guidelines that we implement here in New York.

For my part, I would like to briefly highlight three main lessons learned. The first is that the mission was crucial in itself, not only to shed light on the Lake Chad basin region, but also to make it a long-term priority for the international community. Frankly, the Lake Chad basin region has not always received the attention it deserves from the international community. This mission will help to correct that mistake and injustice. Secondly, this mission proved that, given the multifaceted humanitarian, security and economic crisis that affects the region, the only response possible is a global approach that encompasses all three key priorities: stepping up a coordinated response to Boko Haram, responding to the humanitarian emergency and setting in motion the virtuous circle of development. All of our representatives agree and feedback has clearly shown that to be successful in overcoming those three challenges, they must be tackled head-on and simultaneously.

How can we vanquish terrorism without eradicating abject poverty and malnutrition? How can we achieve that without improving education and youth employment? Conversely, how can we spur development without putting an end to Boko Haram? We can see that they are all interlinked and that compartmentalizing the situation would mean resigning ourselves to doing nothing. The only way to overcome those three challenges is to address their root causes. Once again, it is one thing to understand concepts while here in New York, but quite another to internalize them as we hear from our interlocutors on the ground.

The third lesson — and allow me to stress this — is that our efforts in the Lake Chad region can and must be an example of United Nations reform. This mission confirmed that the silo mentality, which has long been the key component of United Nations bureaucracy, does not produce results and that an integrated approach that smartly combines the entire range of tools available can be successful. The Security Council's mission strengthens a vision held by António Guterres and Amina Mohamed for United Nations reform that France fully supports.

**The President**: I thank the representative of France for his briefing.

I give the floor for the very first time to the Deputy Secretary-General.

**The Deputy Secretary-General**: I would like to thank the members of the Security Council for the warm welcome that I have had today; it is truly humbling. I would also like to congratulate the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Security Council in March.

As Deputy Secretary-General, as an African and as a Nigerian, I truly welcome the Council's visit to the Lake Chad basin to witness first-hand the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency — even more so because, as a child, I grew up in Maiduguri and know that terrorists are not born, but created by a set of circumstances.

Security Council field visits around the world have been instrumental in highlighting the links between peace, development and human rights, and that has been recognized in the remarks made this morning. I thank the Council for the much-needed attention now brought to that troubled region. The Lake Chad crisis provides a powerful illustration of the complex multidimensional challenges facing our modern world. A successful response requires mobilizing our assets holistically to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations is focused on six main pillars of engagement: political; humanitarian assistance; human rights; recovery and development; justice, law enforcement and the financing of terrorism; and

technical support to the regional Multinational Joint Task Force. Three other dimensions are being added: gender; defections and arrests of Boko Haram militants, with its own challenges given the number of youth and girls; and support to Member States in developing a regional plan of action to prevent violent extremism.

It is essential that we address the Boko Haram crisis in a holistic manner. That means looking beyond the security lens and addressing root causes, including inequality, exclusion and the full array of economic, social, political, cultural and religious grievances. To that end, the United Nations continues — through the efforts of Mr. Fall and Mr Chambas, the Secretary-General's Special Representatives for Central Africa and West Africa and the Sahel, respectively — to encourage Member States and the leadership of the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States to convene a joint summit on Boko Haram.

We and the Council are keenly aware of the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation, which has displaced millions of people in the region. Approximately 10.7 million people in the Lake Chad basin need humanitarian assistance now. More than 7 million require food support, including 515,000 children with severe acute malnutrition. Drought is inevitable and there is a real risk of famine, which can be averted with the urgent action that we need now.

The World Food Programme is reaching more than 1 million people in north-east Nigeria and is expanding its efforts. UNICEF has assisted 4 million people with basic health care and safe water. But, despite the considerable contribution of the recent Oslo donor conference, demand outstrips the resources. I urge Member States to ensure that the $1.5 billion humanitarian appeal for the Lake Chad region is fully funded, and I implore affected Governments to ensure full, safe and unimpeded access to all affected areas and populations.

At the same time, we must pay attention to the need to better coordinate our responses and ensure that resources are used in the most efficient manner possible. We must also close the gap between humanitarian assistance and development interventions. Lasting recovery will entail supporting the reconstruction of schools and health centres and reviving essential infrastructure, such as agriculture and water supplies, that supports the necessary livelihoods.

Effective prevention of future radicalization and violence will also entail comprehensive responses that benefit all members of society, especially marginalized communities and youth. I was in Bama just three weeks ago, where we have one of the largest camps, and to see how children were thriving with the opportunity of education, albeit not in the right circumstances. But certainly the transition that UNICEF was able to provide was really a sign of hope, and one that we need to invest in reinforcing the recovery and the investments that are needed.

The situation in the four countries affected by Boko Haram continues to be defined by grave human rights abuses committed by Boko Haram and in the context of counter-terrorism actions. In response, the United Nations is deploying additional human rights officers to collect information on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The United Nations is also assisting affected States to ensure their counter-terrorism efforts comply fully with international human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law. There is a need to strengthen justice mechanisms and ensure due process for defectors and suspected terrorists.

In the Niger and Chad, the United Nations has been able to facilitate the release of dozens of children suspected of being Boko Haram fighters and to deliver them to child protection actors. In Nigeria, the United Nations has been given access to detention facilities in Maiduguri to monitor the conditions under which women and children captured during military operations are being held. Cameroon has also indicated an interest in cooperating with the United Nations on this issue.

The plight of women and girls associated with and affected by Boko Haram is of particular concern. The United Nations and partners have provided care and support to approximately 6,000 women and children formerly associated with or captured by Boko Haram, but many more are still displaced in camps, detained by the authorities or are struggling to reintegrate into their communities, where many face stigma and discrimination. Many are survivors of sexual violation, exploitation and abuse. They need comprehensive assistance. We also need to scale up efforts to provide access to sexual and reproductive health and psychosocial support and livelihood support for female-headed households. We must ensure that women have key roles in the response — from food distribution and camp management to all efforts to

counter violent extremism and to restore State authority and build peace.

This month is about women — it is our women's month. It is fitting that the United Kingdom, which has championed the issue of women and peace and security in the Council for many years, holds the Council presidency. But I also want to commend the Council as a whole. In the past two months, members have heard from the female civil society leader from Nigeria, Fatima Askira of the Borno Women Development Initiative. Council experts have met with senior United Nations leaders from the region in a dedicated meeting on women and peace and security in the Lake Chad basin, and during the Council's mission this past week, members met with female legislators, civil society leaders and the internally displaced.

Addressing the root causes of this crisis is necessary for durable peace in the region. Let us note that it will also to help alleviate the phenomenon of mass migration to Europe by people who feel they have no choice but to look for better opportunities far from their homeland. The United Nations development system is working on national and cross-border initiatives to support poverty reduction, capacity development, effective governance, natural resource management, early recovery, disaster risk reduction, social cohesion, peacebuilding and resilience.

One priority must be the regeneration of Lake Chad itself. The lake and its wetlands have now lost 90 per cent of their water due to unsustainable water management practices and climate change. I commend the Lake Chad basin countries' commitment to the lake's regeneration, but the support of the international community will be essential. I would also like to acknowledge at this point the support of the Chinese Government for its work on some of the feasibility studies that have been needed to look at the possibilities and the financing of that recharge.

The Council's recent visit to Lake Chad has highlighted the urgency and complexity of the crisis faced by the region's people and the threat it poses to international peace and security. My clear message today is that the solution lies in holistic thinking. The 2030 Agenda provides a blueprint and a tool for providing a better future for the people of the Lake Chad basin. A fundamental requirement for success there and around the world is solidarity and partnership — a global partnership for sustainable development, especially in the most fragile contexts where people most need our solidarity and support for their right to a life of dignity.

To that end, I welcome the work being done by the World Bank in the Lake Chad basin, as well as in Somalia, Yemen and South Sudan. I would also like to commend the commitment of the African Union and Africa's regional organizations to peace, security and the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Africa's own Agenda 2063.

I sincerely believe that the Council's visit has boosted the potential for partnership and provided much-needed hope for the people of that region, but also the impetus for us, in the United Nations system, to gather all the assets that we have and to put them to a much more effective and efficient use for the sake of those who deserve so much more attention than we have been able to give in the recent past.

**The President**: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing.

Traditionally in these briefings on Security Council missions it is just the co-leads who speak, but of course all Security Council members are entitled to request the floor. Several members have done so. Allow me to encourage those who have done so to be brief, given the agenda that we have ahead of us this morning.

**Mr. Bermúdez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I thank Ambassadors Rycroft, Seck and Delattre, as well as Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, for their briefings. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Deputy Secretary-General and wish her every success in her new functions.

The situation in the Lake Chad basin is alarming. We are talking about approximately 10 million people who urgently need humanitarian aid. Unfortunately, this crisis does not get much traction in the media, and the international community does not know much about it.

The multidimensional nature of the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad basin has a number of causes and serious consequences. As we said in the briefing on 12 January (see S/PV.7861), the situation has become what it is because of many aggravating factors, such as the grievous security situation, undermined primarily by Boko Haram's terrorist acts, and the lack of food and other basic necessities for those populations.

In order to verify the seriousness of the crisis and get a first-hand account from the most relevant actors — leaders, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, displaced persons, refugees and the military — a Security Council mission was organized to visit Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. The information we obtained was valuable, as were many of the testimonies collected, despite the fact that they described sad, even heartbreaking personal experiences.

For many years now the Lake Chad basin has been witnessing a multifaceted, structural crisis, which demands the development of activities that promote stability, mitigate the threat of terrorism and feed the population. We are well aware that this is an insecure region with very high population growth rates, and one that has suffered from the effects of climate change, poverty and low levels of social investment. It is therefore essential and urgent to ensure that the Governments of the four countries concerned implement public policies that prioritize the allocation of resources to education, health services and job creation. Only then will they be able to tackle the terrible living conditions. To make matters worse, Boko Haram has been terrorizing civilians in many communities, resulting in a flood of tens of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees. The international community should spare no effort to provide the region with the right tools.

Uruguay considers it important to recognize the work of the specialized United Nations agencies and the donor countries that have made good on their pledges, most recently at the Oslo Conference, a topic that we went into in detail during the mission with representatives of the donor countries. We also commend the work of the Multinational Joint Task Force and the progress it has made in combating Boko Haram, in a clear example of how crucial such coordinated regional efforts are in these kinds of crises, when those who undermine stability do not recognize borders or countries and, worse still, violate the fundamental human rights of entire communities, where women and children suffer the most.

Based on this mission, in which we participated — and I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your leadership of the Security Council — the Council has now committed to continuing to address the root causes that have produced this long-ignored crisis.

**Mr. Skau** (Sweden): I too would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your presidency, Mr. President.

During the past week, the Security Council opened its eyes and ears to focus on the people of the Lake Chad basin. What we have seen and heard will not be easily forgotten, nor should it be. Millions of people across four countries have been displaced as a result of the brutal insurgency of Boko Haram. We heard of lives disrupted and livelihoods destroyed. Displacement has led to vulnerability, particularly for women and girls. We heard chilling stories of husbands murdered, children abducted and killed and women subjected to sexual violence. Millions more are suffering from hunger and malnutrition, and we heard that the threat of famine looms.

Yet alongside the desperation there is hope. We have seen how host communities have welcomed the displaced into their homes and villages, sharing already scarce resources, and I would like to pay special tribute to them. We commend the efforts being made by the relevant authorities to mitigate the consequences of the crisis, as well as the work of humanitarian workers and the staff of local non-governmental organizations, who are on the front lines of the response.

However, more is needed if we are to avoid a humanitarian disaster of historic proportions. To begin with, the pledges made in Oslo must be disbursed as quickly as possible. I am happy to report that Sweden has already done so, and I call on others to follow. Secondly, every effort must be made to ensure that the assistance reaches even the most remote and inaccessible areas.

It is clear that the regional nature of the Boko Haram threat requires a regional response. The countries of the region are working together, including through the Multinational Joint Task Force, which is making progress and deserves further international support. We also call for rapid deployment of the African Union civilian component of the Task Force. We must ensure that the response does not increase the suffering of an already brutalized population, and in that regard, we welcome the commitment expressed by all the Governments of the region to protecting civilians and human rights, in line with the 2016 Abuja Action Statement. Counter-terrorism measures must comply with international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. We urge the United Nations to enhance its

human rights presence on the ground in order to support monitoring and capacity-building in that regard. We encourage Governments to enhance their prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration approaches for dealing with persons associated with Boko Haram and to improve countries' coordination in that effort. Children must always be treated as children, and handover protocols that prioritize children should be adopted.

The roots of the conflict run deeper than the Boko Haram insurgency. They include abject poverty, climate change and underdevelopment. Indeed, the situation in the Lake Chad basin is a vivid illustration of the links between security, development and human rights, as well as climate-change-related risks. In Niamey, President Issoufou of the Niger cited the shrinking of Lake Chad as a direct and major reason for the rise of Boko Haram. This is exactly the type of situation that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace agenda were created to respond to. Working within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, we must ensure a coordinated and better linked humanitarian, reconstruction and development response. This multidimensional crisis is an example of one to which the United Nations system can take an integrated approach, and we look forward to supporting the Deputy Secretary-General as she leads the reform of the Organization's development system so that it can better respond to such crises.

Yesterday we celebrated International Women's Day. The women we met in Maroua and Maiduguri, despite the challenges they face on a daily basis, are survivors and leaders, not victims. Meeting the visiting Security Council, they clearly told us their stories so that we would know their realities, and set out their needs so that we would know how to respond. We must not let them down. It is clear that women play a vital role in prevention, peacebuilding and de-radicalization efforts. Improving education, particularly for girls, and ending early marriage are issues that will be central to development in the region. We were encouraged by the development of national action plans on women and peace and security, and those words must now be translated into actions with adequate resources and meaningful implementation.

Now that we have seen the crisis that has been unfolding in the Lake Chad basin, we must ensure that we actively follow up on our engagement and on the trip's findings. That is why we would like to see the Council agree a presidential statement setting out a road map for the way forward that encourages the following actions, among others.

The first is for the Secretary-General to show leadership, including by visiting the region and reporting back to the Council. Secondly, the semi-annual briefings of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), as well as the recurring Security Council meetings under the agenda item on peace and security in Africa, should be used as forums for following up on the findings of our visit. Thirdly, we should work on developing a comprehensive regional strategy for addressing the drivers of the conflict, in line with existing plans and supported by development partners and international financial institutions. Fourthly, we should support efforts to strengthen the links between humanitarian assistance and long-term development measures, focusing on early recovery and the provision of alternative livelihoods. Fifthly, we should encourage the organization in 2018 of a third Regional Security Summit, focusing on post-conflict stabilization and on early recovery and reconstruction. Lastly, we should enhance the capacity of UNOWAS and UNOCA to jointly coordinate United Nations engagement in the region and report on progress in that regard.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Governments of Nigeria, the Niger, Chad and Cameroon, as well as the co-leaders, the United Nations Secretariat and their colleagues on the ground, for making our visit a true success.

**Mr. Lambertini** (Italy): I would like to begin by warmly welcoming the Deputy Secretary-General, with whom Italy has already worked very intensively, both as a mission and through me personally during the organization of Expo Milano 2015, and to say that we are ready to continue that collaboration. I got the feeling during our meeting in Nigeria that Ms. Mohammed's country was already missing her, while we are doing our best to keep her here.

I congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency. This is our first open meeting under your presidency, which has begun with the successful organization of this visit. I would like to express my appreciation to you, to the French and the Senegalese Ambassadors for having set up the visit, and to the whole United Nations family and the Governments of each country for their crucial assistance at every stage of the mission. We were in

favour of the idea of the mission from the start, since we knew it would offer an opportunity to deliver a strong message of support and commitment to the countries of the region and to the international community — and we have not been disappointed. The goals were achieved.

What have we learned from the visit? First of all, we directly observed the magnitude of the crisis in the field, and all of its dimensions — humanitarian, social and security — show it to be even more alarming than expected. I think the best illustration is when we were in Maroua last week, once a tourist destination on the border of Cameroon's main national park. Today, we were not even allowed to leave the airport; we were surrounded by military and they explained the situation. We saw the deep impact of the humanitarian crisis on the region. The Oslo Conference demonstrated growing international attention to Lake Chad. Many States, including Italy, committed to supporting the region. We must continue to stress the importance of timely and coordinated assistance to the region.

Turning to the issue of security, during our visit we observed the firm commitment of local Governments to the fight against Boko Haram and against terrorist activity in the regio — efforts that are shared by civil society. It is crucial for us to support those efforts and to promote the participation of civil society, in particular women's organizations, in mediation and the fight against radicalization. We continue to be concerned about the many trafficking networks operating in the region. There is no underestimating the ties between Boko Haram and transnational organized crime. In particular, we must resolutely tackle any instance of smuggling, especially human trafficking connected to that phenomenon. In that regard, I note the lucid analysis made by the President of the Niger and its Minister of the Interior of the effects of that criminal network on the crisis in the region. We are convinced that those issues ought to be addressed with a broader regional perspective that encompasses the Sahel, in line with the United Nations initiative already in place, particularly the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

But that alone is not enough to improve the security situation. The region is suffering from the socioeconomic effects of desertification. It is essential to accompany security mission with a long-term development plan in order to foster sustainability for the people of the area — in particular, internally displaced persons — and, once the security situation is stabilized, to prevent them from being exploited by traffickers and smugglers.

In closing, we need to analyse the root causes of instability in the region and how they impact the crisis. I would mention, in particular, the effect of climate change. Addressing the root causes of instability, we are convinced, is a key priority if we are to overcome the related security and humanitarian crises and ensure the long-lasting development of the region. In that regard, we feel that the region would benefit from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by fostering sustainable peace and development. During our meeting last week, Mr. President, you used the very apt expression "the neglected crisis" several times. At least the crisis is no longer neglected by the Security Council.

**Ms. Sison** (United States of America): We welcome the new Deputy Secretary-General. We look forward to working with her.

The stories and courage of the women, men and youths we met during our trip are indelibly etched in our minds and will continue to inspire all of us as we work to address the urgent challenges of the people of the Lake Chad basin. We were particularly interested in our Lake Chad basin trip and the United Nations approach to demobilization, reintegration and support for the ex-Boko Haram, especially with regard to the women and girls coming out of association with Boko Haram, as well as the need to ensure that any identified accountability initiatives are responsive to women and girls and include following up on any allegations of sexual and gender-based abuse. We also witnessed the extent of the United Nations regular engagement with women's civil society organizations and women's community leaders on peace and security matters.

We note that youth and women's voices and efforts are absolutely critical to re-establishing peace and security in the Lake Chad basin subregion and in creating the conditions for meaningful change, sustainable economic development and sustainable livelihoods — as noted by the Deputy Secretary-General — especially for households headed by females. Those voices and efforts are also crucial to preventing extremism and creating more inclusive societies.

We also looked at the ongoing training of security forces to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. Still, the protection challenges remain significant, especially for women and children. The

leaders of the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria recognized that fact in their interactions and conversations with us. Thousands of women have been victims of abduction, sexual slavery, forced recruitment and other terrible abuses, and we were humbled in our meetings with the mention of just a few of those acts and first-hand stories.

Furthermore, some of those victims, once out of Boko Haram's clutches, face stigmatization in their communities or suffer secondary or tertiary displacement as a result of such stigma. Still, we were encouraged during our trip by reports of defections from Boko Haram and other extremist groups. That trend underscores the importance of establishing regionally coordinated disarmament, demobilization, deradicalization and reintegration programmes. Respect for human rights on the part of the military, security services and Governments of the Lake Chad basin is also key to establishing and building trust with local communities that have been impacted by the conflict. That was also a subject of conversation with the Governments and leaders, who agreed wholeheartedly with this approach on the respect for human rights.

Finally and more broadly, the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis, particularly the food insufficiency challenges and the spectre of famine, is really difficult to overstate. Enabling access for the humanitarian actors, both from the United Nations and the implementing partners, the non-governmental organizations in each of the four countries we visited will be absolutely essential to turning back famine and to improving food security, especially for vulnerable populations such as mothers and their young children. For all of us colleagues, I think the resolve and energy we have voiced here in our interventions today must be sustained if we are to make a real difference in the lives of those we met during this very important Security Council trip.

**Mr. Okamura** (Japan): I am very encouraged, Mr. President, by your suggestion that we should be more active and action oriented. I would just like to add one very brief comment.

I participated in the mission and was very encouraged by the sense of ownership from the regional countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. They are very determined to deal with the Boko Haram issue, and the Presidents have very clear views on the situation, on the causes and priority tasks to address that issue. The African countries themselves are seeking solutions to their own problems. Regional groups such as the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Group of Five Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States are making joint efforts to tackle the crisis.

Japan believes that assistance from the international community has greater force and is more needed when the country or the people on the ground themselves make genuine efforts to solve their own problems. I have the strong sense that the Boko Haram problem and the humanitarian crisis should not be neglected. Furthermore, the countries of the region have a keen interest in this issue.

*The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.*